



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Scott L. Newsome, Representatives Karin Adams, Robert Bailey, Jeanne Baker, Joe Baril, Alicia T. Bauer, Rafael Burgos, Jr., Clarence Casper, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Susan Deane-Shinbrot, Jim Evans, Thomas A. Frickman, Bob Garcia, Nancy Gilly, Frederick S. Kent, Matthew G. Longino, Jim Loughlin, Emily Maher, Brandon Marley, Jackie Massett, Lisa McCabe, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe L. Merritt, Jim Nault, Kathy Neugent, Lian Obrey, Juliette M. Parker, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Shawn D. Powers, Carolann Quinn, Dutcha Slieker-Hersant, Joan Steinfeld, Irma J. Streeter, James L. Streeter, Archie Swindell, Patricia Wagner, Lori A. Watrous, Gary Welles, Ivy R. Williams, and Jonathan Wilson.

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

REGULAR MEETING

Moderator Scott Newsome called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Moderator Newsome, Rep. Adams, Rep. Bailey, Rep. Baker, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Burgos, Jr., Rep. Casper, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. Evans, Rep. Frickman, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Maher, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Nault, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Powers, Rep. Quinn, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Slieker-Hersant, Rep. Wagner, Rep. Watrous, Rep. Welles and Rep. Wilson
Members Absent: Rep. Baril, Rep. Kent, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Longino, Rep. Marley, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCabe, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Neugent, Rep. Obrey, Rep. Parker, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Swindell and Rep. Williams

Moderator Newsome stated that 26 members were present and he declared a quorum.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Graner, Gretchen Newsome from the Board of Education, Assistant Town Clerk Dawn Rahilly and Town Clerk Office Assistant II Michael Thorpe.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Wilson, seconded by Rep. Deane-Shinbrot.

The vote on approval of the minutes carried 21 in favor, 5 abstentions. Abstaining: Reps. Bauer, Burgos, Casper, Gilly and Watrous.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Newsome stated that Reps. Massett, McCabe, Neugent and Parker notified the Town Clerk of their absence.

The Moderator mentioned the Groton Public Library Grand Opening celebration of the Looking Forward, Giving Back renovation project. It will take place on March 22, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. at the Library.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Financial report

Town Manager Mark Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of February 28, 2017 was

approximately \$9.9 million which represents 8.1% of the FYE 2017 General Fund adopted budget. He reported that the FYE 2017 General Contingency budget was appropriated at \$425,000 with a current balance of \$299,821. He stated the approved and pending transfers are listed in the Town Manager's News. He reported that the Capital Reserve Fund balance as of February 28, 2017 was \$1.5 million.

2. Monthly briefing

Town Manager Mark Oefinger highlighted items from the Town Manager's Monthly News report. He announced that Tanko Street lighting installed 1,256 cobra head LED fixtures. He stated that there are several streetlights which will require replacement of the support arms and several with power issues that will be addressed by Eversource directly. He added that the remaining lights will be installed when the Town owned parking lots are completed, and the lights on Water Street in Mystic will be repaired at that time as well. He mentioned the Looking Forward, Giving Back renovation project Grand Opening at the Groton Public Library on Wednesday March 22, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. He noted that the Groton Public Library will have their first TEDxGrotonPublicLibrary discussion on Thursday March 23, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. TED is a nonprofit, global phenomenon devoted to making great ideas accessible to spark group conversations. He gave an update on the Vergennes Court Closure. The preliminary design has been completed and the project is slated for construction under the Local Road Accident Reduction Program administered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. He referred to Attachment 4, an update on Groton Economic Development projects from the Office of Planning and Development Services. He noted Attachment 5, a letter of resignation from the Jabez Smith House curator, Jennifer Emerson effective March 31, 2017. He referred to Attachment 6, a letter from the State Department of Economic and Community Development approving the Groton Airport as an Airport Development Zone. He referred to Attachment 8, the Executive Summary for the 2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer). He noted Attachment 10, an update from Public Works regarding the Crystal Lake Road reconstruction.

Responding to Moderator Newsome, Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that the Airport Development Zone is similar to the Enterprise Zone. It offers tax credits to encourage economic development.

G. REPORT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The report was included in the Town Manager's News.

H. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Graner addressed the RTM with a budget update. He explained the Governor's proposed budget for education includes a massive reduction to our Education Cost Sharing Grant: even with the proposed addition of special education funding, Groton schools are slated to lose \$9,200,00. The proposed teacher pension payments would increase the tax burden by approximately \$4,000,000. That would total a \$13,200,000 loss to the Town and our schools, which is the highest in Connecticut. He stated that he spoke before the Appropriations Committee in Hartford on February 21, 2017 with a plea for fair and reasonable education funding. He added that Groton was well represented at that hearing with State Representatives and BOE members. He suggested a two-step process to address the current state-wide crisis. The first step is to develop a fair formula to determine education funding for each town. He believes the proposed formula is unfair for two reasons. Using HUSKY eligibility to determine students who live in low-income households is unfair because it excludes approximately 500 military dependents who are eligible for free/reduced lunch but are not eligible for HUSKY because they receive Tricare health benefits. In addition, the formula is unfair because it relies almost exclusively on a town's property wealth to determine the level of education funding. In the Governor's budget proposal, Groton's wealth index is so high that it calls for a huge reduction in state aid. That determination appears to contradict the fact that Groton has been listed in both 2012 and 2013 on the 25 Distressed Municipalities list compiled by Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. Groton is a town with a significant portion of its

residents with low income, high unemployment and a high rate of poverty. The state needs to develop a formula that is fair to all Connecticut municipalities. Once that is done, the second step is to develop a reasonable plan to phase-in any adjustments. For at least the last decade, the Education Cost Sharing formula has not been applied due to the hold harmless provision. During that time, Groton has received approximately \$25,000,000 in ECS while the education budget rose from approximately \$70,000,000 to \$76,000,000 which is a 9.25% increase. Each year the local costs went up even though the student enrollment declined by approximately 15%. It makes sense that if a key measure is not taken into account for 10 years, a great deal of change may have occurred that requires adjustments. He requested that the legislature table this portion of the Governor's budget and maintain the current level of funding until such time a new, fair formula and phase-in schedule are developed. In addition he mentioned that a Town Hall Meeting will take place on March 20, 2017 with State Representatives Conley and de la Cruz. More information will be forthcoming on this meeting. He also suggested that the Town Council, RTM and BOE get together to discuss alternatives and contingency plans by early May.

In response to Rep. Casper, Dr. Michael Graner stated that the Federal Government provides aid in the amount of \$3,500 for each military dependent, with a cost of approximately \$14,000 a year per student to educate. He added that he has been in contact with the Impact Aid Office and Congressman Courtney on this matter. He continued to say that civilian children living in base housing are only entitled to \$175.00 a year funding and there are approximately 145 civilian children living there. Dr. Graner believes that these children should be counted as military dependents and that Groton receive full impact aid.

Responding to Rep. Hubbard, Dr. Michael Graner stated that the Federal Government provides \$1.2 million in special education funding with an additional funding for children of low income families which makes a total of approximately \$2 million in funding. It is his understanding that the new administration's budget will shift some of this funding to Charter Schools.

I. LIAISON REPORTS

1. Economic Development Commission

Rep. Powers reviewed items discussed at the March 2, 2017 meeting, including the Airport Development Zone and Public Property Redevelopment. Properties on the agenda included: 517/519 Gold Star Highway, Groton Heights, Mystic Oral School and CT NEXT - Thames River Innovation Project. He stated that the Air Show scheduled for October 6th-7th is looking for more volunteers. They discussed a special meeting that was held by the Economic Development Business Outreach Task Force. He also reported on the Water Resource Protection District - Zoning review of wetland setbacks and business impact, that included an extensive list of projects from Groton Utilities.

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE - Chairman Nault

Chairman Nault read the minutes of the meeting held on March 8, 2017. The minutes are on file in the Town Clerks Office.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and make recommendations on Referrals 2016-0295 and 2017-0027 Resolutions for FYE 2017 General Contingency Transfers.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Pasqualini, seconded by Rep. Evans and so voted unanimously.

2016-0295 Contingency Transfer for Wage Adjustments

RESOLUTION FOR FYE 2017 GENERAL CONTINGENCY TRANSFERS

WHEREAS, the Town Charter provides for General Contingency transfers during the year, and

WHEREAS, during the FYE 2018 personnel budget development a calculation error was discovered for FYE 2017 wages for some employees of the Telecommunicators union, and

WHEREAS, salary increases for promotions from probationary employees to Telecommunicator III positions and for reclassifications to Telecommunicator IV positions were not included in the FYE 2017 budget, and

WHEREAS, these increases should be incorporated into the FYE 2017 Emergency Communications budget (#1014) through a Contingency transfer, and

WHEREAS, before this transfer is applied, the General Contingency has a balance of \$352,310 including pending transfers, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that \$12,155 be transferred from the General Fund Contingency function (#1074) to the Emergency Communications function (#1014) and referred to the RTM for approval.

A motion was made by Rep. Nault, seconded by Rep. Wilson, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0027 Contingency Transfer for Town Manager Recruitment Services

RESOLUTION FOR FYE 2017 GENERAL CONTINGENCY TRANSFER

WHEREAS, the Town Charter provides for General Contingency transfers during the year, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council, acting as the Town Manager Recruitment Committee, has engaged the services of Randi Frank Consulting LLC in the search for a new Town Manager, and

WHEREAS, before this transfer is applied, the General Contingency has a balance of \$340,155 including pending transfers, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that an amount not to exceed \$24,000 be transferred from the General Fund Contingency function (#1074) to the Human Resources function (#1012) and referred to the RTM for approval.

A motion was made by Rep. Nault, seconded by Rep. Adams, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES -

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Neugent

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION - Chairman Wilson

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman McDermott

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Deane-Shinbrot

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Massett

No meeting, no report.

K. BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

Moderator Newsome stated that the Town Council passed the resolution setting the RTM Budget Meeting date on the FYE 2018 Annual Town Budget. The meeting will begin on May 1, 2017 at

7:00 p.m. at the Groton Senior Center. He added that Committee meetings should be scheduled as soon as possible.

L. OTHER BUSINESS

The Moderator read the Town Council referral 2017-0053 Resolution extending the appropriation for the 2012 Road Maintenance/Rehabilitation Project. He referred the matter to the Finance Committee to report to the full RTM with their recommendation at the April 12, 2017 regular RTM meeting.

Responding to Rep. Wilson, Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that the Town Council had requested him to remain in his position until June 2, 2017. He stated that he would remain and the RTM applauded his decision.

M. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Rep. Wilson, seconded by Rep. Gilly and so voted unanimously. The Moderator adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

Attest:

Dawn Rahilly, Assistant Town Clerk

Michael Thorpe, Town Clerk Office Assistant II